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RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 207th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Wednesday, 27 July 1994, at 3.30 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. CISSE (Senegal)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.45 p.m.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

1. The agenda was adopted.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS RELATED TO THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE

2. The CHAIRMAN reminded the Committee that on 4 May 1994 in Cairo, Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) had signed an agreement concerning Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area and the transfer of jurisdiction over them to the PLO. On 1 July 1994, Yasser Arafat had visited those areas and had decided to establish his permanent residence in the Gaza Strip. The enthusiasm with which he had been greeted was a sign of popular support for the peace process.

3. Effective 1 June 1994, the Secretary-General had named an Under-Secretary-General to serve as Special Coordinator in the occupied territory. The Special Coordinator would remain in constant contact with the specialized agencies, the World Bank, non-governmental organizations and the donor community.

4. Mr. AL-KIDWA (Permanent Observer for Palestine) said that the agreement between the PLO as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and the Government of Israel had been smoothly implemented. The Palestinian police force was successfully established, and the Palestinian authority was functioning normally and daily increasing its activity. Nevertheless, some points would require further negotiation, including the demarcation of the Jericho Area, the stationing of Palestinian police on the bridge on the road from Jericho to Jordan, and the status of Palestinian detainees, most of whom remained in prison. The most important tasks were to move as quickly as possible towards negotiation of a second implementation agreement to extend self-government to the rest of the West Bank and to reach agreement regarding the holding of a general election with the participation of the Palestinians living in East Jerusalem.

5. Unfortunately, the 4 May Declaration of Principles had not been fully implemented. Elections were to have taken place in July but, because of a dispute regarding the Jericho Area, that had not been possible. In addition, Israel had failed to relinquish its authority in certain spheres agreed on in the Declaration of Principles, although that authority was to have been assumed by the Palestinians simultaneously with their assumption of authority in Gaza and Jericho. Nevertheless, he expected fruitful negotiations on the subject of a second implementation agreement.

6. Another important issue concerned the assistance which the international community, and especially the donor community, had promised to Palestine. Pledges had been made in the amount of $2.4 billion over a five-year period, of which $1.2 billion was to have been spent in the first three-year period. But while that assistance reflected the commitment of the international community to helping Palestine build its authority as a means to building its State, the promised assistance had been less forthcoming than had been hoped. Although

(Mr. Al-Kidwa, Observer, Palestine)

some lacked confidence in the Palestinians' readiness for self-government, his delegation believed that Palestine was indeed ready, and that the World Bank and the international community could have done more to improve the situation. Since it was, after all, a matter of voluntary assistance, no blame was attached to that failure. But the issue was an important one, especially in the Gaza Strip, where unemployment had reached 40 to 45 per cent and the occupying Power had completely destroyed the local infrastructure. The Palestinian people were optimistic about the peace agreement and were enjoying the fruits of the new situation, especially where security was concerned, but they had as yet seen no improvement in their economic situation. His delegation hoped that donor countries would accelerate the assistance process.

7. The United Nations had made significant contributions to the situation in Palestine. The Secretary-General had called for an inter-agency meeting to achieve maximum coordination among concerned United Nations agencies and had appointed a Special Coordinator of United Nations activities in the occupied territory, Ambassador Roed Terje Larsen of Norway. But the activity of the United Nations and the Special Coordinator should not be limited to Gaza and Jericho, or even to the West Bank and Gaza, but should be extended to the entire occupied territory, and the United Nations should be bound by the clear political position adopted on the issue by the Security Council and the General Assembly. His delegation welcomed the Washington Declaration which had recently been concluded between Jordan and Israel and hoped that it would lead to further progress towards agreements between Israel and the Syrian and Lebanese Governments. However, his delegation had strong reservations regarding section B (3) of the Washington Declaration. Jerusalem remained an integral part of the occupied territory, as repeatedly affirmed by the Security Council and the General Assembly. He thanked the Chairman and the Committee for their support for and solidarity with the Palestinian people and expressed his appreciation of the Governments who had aided the activities of the Committee, particularly Canada, which had hosted the last meeting of non-governmental organizations in North America.

8. The CHAIRMAN expressed his hope that the international community, especially the donor countries, would furnish the aid which they had promised to the development effort in the occupied territories, Gaza and Jericho, and that the Washington Declaration would be a key step towards peace in the Middle East.

REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN ON THE MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE OF THE NON-ALIGNED COUNTRIES, THE MEETINGS OF THE ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY, THE UNITED NATIONS SEMINAR ON PALESTINIAN TRADE AND INVESTMENT NEEDS AND THE NORTH AMERICAN NGO SYMPOSIUM ON THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE

9. The CHAIRMAN said that he had participated in the Eleventh Ministerial Conference of the Non-Aligned Countries in Cairo from 31 May to 3 June 1994. The question of Palestine was always on the agenda of the ministerial conferences, in which the PLO also participated, and the Non-Aligned Movement had created a special committee for the question of Palestine. He drew attention to the final documents of the Ministerial Conference, in which the Ministers renewed their support for the peace process in Palestine and expressed their belief that significant progress had been made.

(The Chairman)

10. The Organization of African Unity (OAU) had met from 13 to 15 June 1994 in Tunis. OAU, which had been founded in 1963 as a result of the liberation struggles in Africa, had always supported the cause of liberation in other countries, including Palestine. He drew attention to the final documents of the meeting, which reaffirmed the support of OAU for the Palestinian people, and the PLO as its only representative, on all the points mentioned in previous OAU resolutions. OAU had recognized the progress achieved in the peace process, particularly the Washington Declaration, and had requested that international organizations should support the Washington Declaration, the Cairo Agreement, and the Palestinian people.

11. Pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 48/158 A and 48/213, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People had convened the United Nations Seminar on Palestinian Trade and Investment Needs, which had met in Paris from 20 to 22 June 1994.

12. The seminar, which had been attended by Palestinian, Israeli and other experts and by representatives of donor countries, United Nations bodies and agencies already involved in projects in the occupied Palestinian territories, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations active in providing assistance to the Palestinian people and the United Nations bodies and agencies concerned had provided a forum for exchanging views on various aspects of Palestinian needs in the fields of trade and investment and sharing the experience gained by sectors of the international community in that respect. A total of six meetings had been held at which 16 experts had presented papers on different aspects of the issue, and representatives of 13 Governments and agencies had made keynote statements during the deliberations. The seminar had opened with a plenary session on the theme "Building a Palestinian economy - challenges and prospects" followed by three round-table discussions on the themes "Laying the foundation for Palestinian economic development", "Investment for development: Palestinian needs and policy options" and "Trade for development: Palestinian needs and policy options" respectively. The Committee's delegation welcomed the commitments of the donor community at the Conference to Support Middle East Peace and its readiness to provide Palestinians with the assistance they needed at that crucial juncture of their history.

13. The Eleventh United Nations North American NGO Symposium on the Question of Palestine, on the theme "Palestine - Towards a just and lasting peace; Focus on mobilizing NGO support for cooperation and development", had been held from 6 to 8 July 1994 under the auspices of the Committee in Toronto, Canada, with the active participation of the Canadian Government. It had been attended by over 200 participants representing 58 non-governmental organizations. Fifteen Governments had sent observers. Experts from North America, Palestine and Israel had presented papers at the four plenary meetings on the reconstruction and nation-building process during the transition period in the light of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements. Six workshops had also been held on, inter alia, relevant issues of economic development, defending human rights and the experience of Palestinian women in development. The discussions had served as an occasion for the North American NGO community to coordinate, intensify and diversify its efforts and activities

(The Chairman)

and thus increase its support for and assistance to the Palestinian people in the political, social and economic spheres or in the various phases of building necessary infrastructure. The Symposium had helped to develop cooperation between Canadian non-governmental organizations involved in the issue and the Canadian Government which was particularly crucial for future action aimed at finding a just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine. The North American NGOs had decided, in order to ensure continuity throughout the year, to maintain the practice they had adopted during the previous year's Symposium by establishing standing committees in areas of particular interest to them, such as mass media, human rights, economic development, religious groups and women, and project execution. They had renewed their commitment to the goals of the United Nations, in particular those of the Committee, to support the ongoing peace process.

14. Mr. AL-KIDWA (Permanent Observer for Palestine) drew the Committee's attention to the unanimous adoption by the Economic and Social Council of a resolution on assistance to the Palestinian people, paragraph 9 of which authorized the convening in 1995 of a United Nations-sponsored seminar on Palestinian administrative, managerial and financial needs and challenges in light of the new developments. He also drew attention to a draft resolution currently being considered by the Economic and Social Council concerning the Middle East peace process. While his delegation did not have any objection to the draft resolution, it felt that the Council was not the appropriate forum for such a resolution, given its purely political nature.

15. The CHAIRMAN, speaking as the representative of Senegal, said that paragraph 9 of the resolution on assistance to the Palestinian people indeed gave the Committee the option of holding a seminar on economic questions. Concerning the resolution on the Middle East peace process, his delegation had taken note of the fact that the Palestine Liberation Organization delegation had no objection to it.

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16. The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee would be informed as soon as the final arrangements for the combined United Nations International NGO Meeting and European NGO Symposium on the Question of Palestine had been made.

OTHER MATTERS

17. The CHAIRMAN informed the Committee that the seminar and NGO symposium for the Latin American and Caribbean region, which was to have been convened in Brasilia, had been postponed. However, the Government of Brazil had agreed to the holding of the seminar and NGO symposium during the first quarter of 1995 at either Rio de Janeiro or São Paulo.

18. Mr. TLILI (Department of Public Information), introducing a new publication of the Department on the question of Palestine entitled "Promoting a culture for peace in the Middle East", said that it reflected the proceedings of the International Encounter for European Journalists on the Question of Palestine

(Mr. Tlili)

organized by his Department from 9 to 11 June 1993 in London. Representatives of the European, Palestinian and Israeli media, as well as foreign journalists based in London and members of the diplomatic corps, had participated in the Encounter. While various aspects of the publication indicated clearly that the Encounter had taken place before the signing of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, the substance of the debate had gone beyond the particulars of those arrangements and had focused on the underlying assumption that a true and lasting peace also required a culture for peace which involved a comprehensive, society-wide system of values that would lead citizens of the Middle East not only to put a premium on but also to stand for peace.

The meeting rose at 4.45 p.m.